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Expand the mass base in the countryside!

“Clarifications on certain issues in step-by-step organizing in the countryside” issued by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee in September 2000 is being published as a special AB issue in response to the Central Committee’s call for the further expansion of the revolutionary mass base in the countryside. Through this issue, all comrades and Party units, especially NPA units, are invited to submit to AB their experiences in organizing, including their implementation of the PBCC’s clarifications in this document.

In general, we have recovered from the serious damage to our mass base resulting from past deviations and errors, intense enemy operations and the trouble fomented by the counterrevolutionary renegades. In certain regions, we have already equalled or surpassed past records of expansion.

The momentum of expansion has continued even in areas where the enemy’s reactionary troops are relatively concentrated. This is due to our tight grasp of the principle of advancing intensive and extensive guerrilla warfare, implementing the correct disposition of NPA forces, correctly allocating gains in advanced guerrilla fronts in order to set up new guerrilla fronts and

ensuring the relatively coordinated advance of guerrilla fronts.

But the spread of our mass base in the entire country is still uneven. More than 60% of our mass base is concentrated in a few regions. Even in the regions where our mass base is relatively widespread and stable, the work of consolidation falls very much behind.

Thus, one of the urgent tasks pinpointed by the PBCC 2000 is to further step up the pace of organizing the peasant masses in the countryside. This is the basis for achieving genuinely intensive and extensive guerrilla warfare nationwide and the vigorous advance of agrarian revolution in the countryside. Moreover, the intense economic and political crisis that now besets our semicolonial and semifeudal society presents

extraordinary opportunities to further accelerate the expansion and strengthening of the revolutionary forces, especially the revolutionary strength of the peasant masses.

There are certain issues that have, in various ways, affected the desired pace of organizing in the countryside. The PBCC clarifies these issues as follows:

1 The Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid (PKM—the revolutionary peasant mass organization) should be composed of all qualified peasants from the poor and middle peasantry (including the lower middle, middle middle and upper middle strata), regardless of gender, age or religion.

The view and practice limiting PKM membership to peasant men

have ossified in certain sections of the revolutionary movement. Peasant organizing groups and organizing committees that are being set up are composed exclusively of men.

Initially, it is natural and advantageous to focus attention on contacting, and organizing, peasant men who are heads of families (the family is the basic production unit in the countryside). But this initial arrangement often becomes too prolonged and, in not a few areas, becomes the universal practice. Some comrades even reason out that since women and youth are covered by the organizing efforts of their respective sectoral mass organizations, their exclusion from the PKM presents no problem.

Thus, peasant women and youth become excluded from the main peasant mass organization. They are deprived of a voice in the mass organization whose distinct and main task is to advance agrarian revolution. Meantime, the peasant organization is rendered limited and weak through this erroneous practice.

Women and youth must be actively recruited to the PKM even as the sectoral mass organizations of women and youth in the barrio are continually and further expanded and strengthened. They address the particular interests and struggles of their respective sectors that the PKM cannot fully attend to and assist in the overall consolidation and strengthening of the peasant movement.

Depending on the particular situation, it is possible for women and youth to become members immediately at the stage of forming the peasant organizing group, or they may become members en masse once the organizing committees and full-fledged peasant organizations are set up. In any case, women

and the youth must be consciously included in recruitment plans for PKM chapters.

Our long and rich experience has affirmed the capabilities of full-fledged peasant organizations composed not only of male heads of families but of peasant women and youth in advancing armed struggle and agrarian revolution in the countryside.

2 Transform traditional and legal mass organizations in the barrios. Aside from providing legal cover for revolutionary forces and activities, these may serve as channels for open campaigns and mass struggles. Among the most prominent traditional mass organizations are associations related to production (*mutual labor exchanges*, irrigators' associations, cooperatives) and the tribal structures of national minorities.

Party groups and core groups of mass activists should be built within traditional production-related mass organizations in the barrios and guide these in accordance with revolutionary objectives.

When organizing revolutionary peasant associations among national minorities, we must avoid pitting these against traditional tribal structures. We must do our best to transform and revolutionize such tribal structures. They may become alliance organizations where peasant associations have their own place and voice. Moreover, they may be developed to the point where they constitute the revolutionary leadership and structure of local people's democratic power.

3 Revolutionary mass organizations of other national minorities must be set up and integrated into the NDF as allied

organizations. Aside from those that have already been set up and integrated into the National Democratic Front, we must set up the revolutionary mass organizations of the Mangyan, Dumagat, Agta, Lumad and others.

4 The formation of organizing committees of barrio folk (peasants, women, youth and others) indicates that organizing groups of barrio folk have already been well spread out in major areas of the barrio. Which means, to a large extent if not entirely, the barrio has been effectively covered and the structure for the mass recruitment of others who are qualified to become members of revolutionary mass organizations is in place.

Nonetheless, in areas where we have long been operating, it is possible to immediately set up the peasant organizing committee on the basis of our long acquaintance with, and appraisal of, advanced elements in the barrio.

Once the organizing committee has been set up, we must further accelerate the formation and expansion of organizing groups until we have recruited all or the vast majority of those qualified to join the mass organizations being formed.

Committees for organization, education, production, culture, health and self-defense are also set up along with or immediately after the organizing committees are formed. The organizing committee and its subcommittees focus on plans and tasks encompassing the entire barrio instead of simply scattered sitios and portions of the barrio. Principally, they advance agrarian struggles and other mass campaigns.

It is neither necessary nor beneficial to define differing

categories and levels of “regular” and “irregular” peasant organizing committees (with the various subcommittees already set up in the former and none in the latter), as is the practice in certain regions. Such additional categories and levels further prolong the formation of revolutionary mass organizations. Thus, we will no longer use the categories of “regular” peasant organizing committee and “irregular” peasant organizing committee in regard to organizing in the countryside.

We must not remain too long at the stage of the peasant organizing committee and delay the formation of full-fledged mass organizations. Full-fledged mass organizations may be set up once our organizing efforts have effectively covered the entire or greater part of the barrio, we have recruited a significant number among those qualified, and all the rest are already within our effective reach and influence. The organizational integration of the majority or all of those qualified may be completed at the stage of the full-fledged mass organization.

Neither should we delay indefinitely the setting up of full-fledged mass organizations because of a stringent military situation that prevents the holding of a general assembly to elect the organization’s leadership. Although it would be best and worth our effort to set up the leadership of the mass organization through election by a general membership assembly, voting may be also done through delegates selected by the members. If a general membership assembly cannot be held, this can be done once the situation improves.

5 The membership of peasant organizing groups should not be limited to mass activists. In step-

by-step organizing, we must give due, and consciously pay attention to, the following main objectives/considerations:

- The revolutionary mass organization must cover in the most rapid way, the majority, if not all, of the target elements among democratic sectors/classes.

- We must systematically recruit, select and train leaders and mass activists at every stage of organizing and avoid limiting the leadership only to those we first contacted, obtained acquaintance and mobilized.

- We must make sure to give foremost attention to organizing and promoting the role of the most oppressed and most exploited strata—while effectively covering all democratic and progressive forces in the barrio.

Organizing groups are set up through ways that enable us to cover in the fastest manner, the majority of the barrio, if not its entirety, and the majority, if not all, of the poor and lower middle peasants. Organizing groups serve as bases for the setting up of organizing committees and full-fledged mass organizations; it is here that we produce, train and temper leaders and mass activists who can be relied upon to lead the barrio once the organizing committees, full-fledged mass organizations and organs of political power are set up. Thus, the mass members of mass organizations being set up in the barrios are formed into organizing groups before the committees and full-fledged mass organizations are set up. The development of mass activists within and outside the organizing groups must be done in this context. Mass activists are concentrated in the organizing committee and in the various committees being set up

under the organizing committee/mass organization. Mass activists who have been developed at the organizing group level act as leaders and vice leaders of organizing groups. We can also recruit part-time activists who assist the army not only within the barrio but in adjacent barrios.

While they may not all be mass activists, the entry of peasant masses into organizing groups is itself proof that they are ready to be organized. We must seize such opportunities and maximize the positive results of further expansion in mass organizing. Once the masses are ready to be organized, the appropriate form of organization and action to maximize the mobilization and development of the biggest possible number in the fastest way then becomes the main issue.

To effectively lead and reach out to the masses, a revolutionary mass organization needs both activists and ordinary members. Even the recruitment of mass activists will be very limited and sluggish if membership in organizing groups is confined to relatively advanced elements (mass activists). Anyone who is trustworthy, ready to join the group, attend meetings and perform tasks should be allowed to be a member of the organizing group. It is through the activities of the organizing group that we can discern the various levels of assiduousness and ability of individual group members and contacts, and give them various tasks according to their capabilities. It is also in this manner that we can recruit the biggest number of advanced elements who are in a position to lead the entire barrio.

6 Thus it is wrong to limit recruitment of peasant organizing groups to advanced elements. We must open our doors to,

and encourage, all elements who are ready and willing to be integrated into these groups, even as we remain vigilant against bad elements. In the most consolidated sections of our guerrilla fronts, the setting up of municipal-wide full-fledged mass organizations, or the equivalent, if not wider, is done in synchronized manner. The establishment of full-fledged mass organizations in guerrilla bases within our guerrilla fronts indicates that barrio revolutionary committees may already be set up.

We must synchronize the formation of revolutionary committees in two or more clusters of consolidated barrios and guerrilla bases within guerrilla fronts. We must avoid situations where a handful of adjacent barrios or no more than a small cluster of barrios would overly stand out and attract too much attention from the enemy. We must advance the establishment of guerrilla bases and organs of people's political power wave upon wave in ever wider sections of the countryside.

In setting up barrio revolutionary committees, we implement the three-thirds policy (3/3). Meaning, BRCs—will be composed of elements from the Party, the basic masses and the middle forces. Within the BRC, the leading party is the Communist Party of the Philippines; the core of political power is the basic alliance of the working class and peasantry; and the mass organizations serve as the mass base of the people's government.

In keeping a tight grasp of the above-mentioned principles, we can avoid past weaknesses and errors in setting up BRCs, such as the tendency to neglect and liquidate

Party organizations, the failure to advance the consolidation of the power of the basic classes and amplification of the voice and power of those from the middle forces, the belittling and whittling down of the role and tasks of the mass organizations, and the reinforcement of bureaucracy and commandism.

Once full-fledged barrio peasant associations have been set up in the majority of barrios that should be covered within a municipality, the municipal-wide PKM may be formed. Advancing to this level of organizing has requisites in regard to the sufficiency alliance work and mass work in the town centers, the existence of a company- or bigger-size armed force in the guerrilla front (with a platoon-size center of gravity, deployed guerrilla squads and militia units set up in the barrios), and an extensive and strong local Party organization.

7 Boldly recruit into the Party the most advanced elements from among the ranks of the peasant masses. In the big, advanced barrios, a relatively larger Party organization may be set up at the barrio level, composed of a Party branch with branch groups in every major part of the barrio, Party groups within mass organizations and other revolutionary formations in the barrio.

As the Party's basic organization, the Party branch must lead and supervise the revolutionary movement in the barrio and carry the responsibility to ensure the closest links between the Party and the masses. Branch groups that are being set up in major areas within the barrio are part of the branch and operate in accordance with the power and tasks

of the branch.

Party groups within mass organizations ensure the closest links between the Party and the mass membership of the mass organizations and implement the policies and decisions of the branch within their scope.

8 Invigorate political education and propaganda work. The systematic political education of our mass base seriously lags behind. There is also a vast room for improvement in our propaganda work in terms of content, form, reach and regularity.

We must use rapid means of reaching out to more people. Examples are seminars that are brief and with many participants, video shows, radio programs (legal and underground), cultural presentations and others.

We must seriously develop the use of radio for community broadcasting. This will become a channel at the local level for timely and swift propagation of revolutionary analyses and stand on issues, news from various parts of the country, and calls for campaigns and mass struggles.

While the machinery for broadcasting is being set up, regions and fronts are encouraged to produce and distribute taped presentations that discuss issues of the day and deliver news.

We must also develop the use of still and video cameras to record tactical offensives of the people's army as well as mass struggles and other significant events. Photos and video can be used for political education and propaganda not only within but outside guerrilla fronts. **AB**